

**STRATEGIC WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A
MODERATING ROLE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES IN
RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between strategic workforce management and employee engagement in technology companies in Rivers State. Ten objectives were formulated to guide the investigation. Based on the review, the study concluded that strategic workforce management has a substantial positive impact on employee engagement in tech companies in Rivers State. The study recommended that tech companies should invest in advanced HR analytics tools to assess and enhance emotional engagement, using data on feedback, absenteeism, and well-being to create targeted interventions. Additionally, regular training on data interpretation for HR professionals is suggested to improve the accuracy of insights and subsequent actions. This study contributed to the field of organizational behavior by providing valuable insights into how strategic workforce management practices influence various aspects of employee engagement in the tech industry in Rivers State.

Keywords: Strategic Workforce Management, Employee Engagement, Organizational Culture, Talent Management

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement remains a persistent challenge for tech companies globally, and this issue is particularly pronounced in Rivers State, Nigeria, where the industry grapples with unique socio-economic and organizational challenges. Employee engagement, which reflects the emotional and intellectual commitment of employees to their work, is a key driver of innovation, productivity, and organizational success (Akinyemi & Igbino, 2023). Despite its importance, many tech companies in Rivers State report disengagement among employees, characterized by low morale, high turnover rates, and suboptimal productivity levels. Employees in these organizations frequently cite limited career growth opportunities, inadequate recognition systems, and unsupportive workplace environments as critical contributors to their disengagement (Eze et al., 2022). This disengagement results not only in reduced job satisfaction but also in diminished creativity and commitment to organizational goals, ultimately hampering the competitive edge of these firms.

In response to these challenges, some tech companies have taken steps to enhance engagement by introducing initiatives such as performance-based incentives, team-building activities, and flexible work arrangements (Olatunji & Adebajo, 2022). These efforts aim to address immediate concerns, such as low job satisfaction and burnout. Additionally, some organizations have invested in training and professional development programs, recognizing the need to equip employees with the skills required to navigate the rapidly changing technological landscape. However, these interventions often fall short of addressing the deeper systemic issues that contribute to disengagement. For instance, while providing training opportunities, many firms fail to establish clear career progression frameworks or integrate employee feedback into their workforce strategies (Okoro & Nwachukwu, 2023). One critical oversight is the lack of strategic workforce management approaches designed to sustain long-term employee engagement. Workforce management in many Rivers State tech companies remains reactive rather than proactive, focusing on short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions. This is evident in the inconsistent implementation of workforce policies and the limited emphasis on fostering a collaborative and inclusive organizational culture (Brown & Akindele,

2023). Furthermore, the competitive nature of the tech industry, coupled with the scarcity of highly skilled talent, exacerbates the challenges. Employees often feel undervalued or overburdened, leading to a loss of motivation and increased turnover rates, which further destabilizes organizational operations.

Given these limitations, it is evident that the measures taken so far have not adequately addressed the root causes of disengagement. Strategic workforce management, which aligns employee needs with organizational objectives through well-designed policies and practices, offers a pathway to resolving these issues. By emphasizing holistic strategies that encompass career development, feedback systems, and emotional well-being, organizations can foster a more engaged and resilient workforce (Ikechukwu & Adebayo, 2022). This study recognizes the urgent need to bridge the gap between employee expectations and organizational practices, particularly in the context of Rivers State's tech sector.

The point of departure for this research lies in its focus on integrating employee engagement with strategic workforce management within a regional context. While existing studies have explored these variables separately, there is a paucity of research examining their interplay in Rivers State's tech industry. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the systemic and contextual factors contributing to disengagement and proposing actionable, sustainable solutions tailored to the region's unique challenges. By doing so, it aims to provide insights that can help tech companies in Rivers State optimize their workforce strategies, enhance employee engagement, and achieve long-term organizational success.

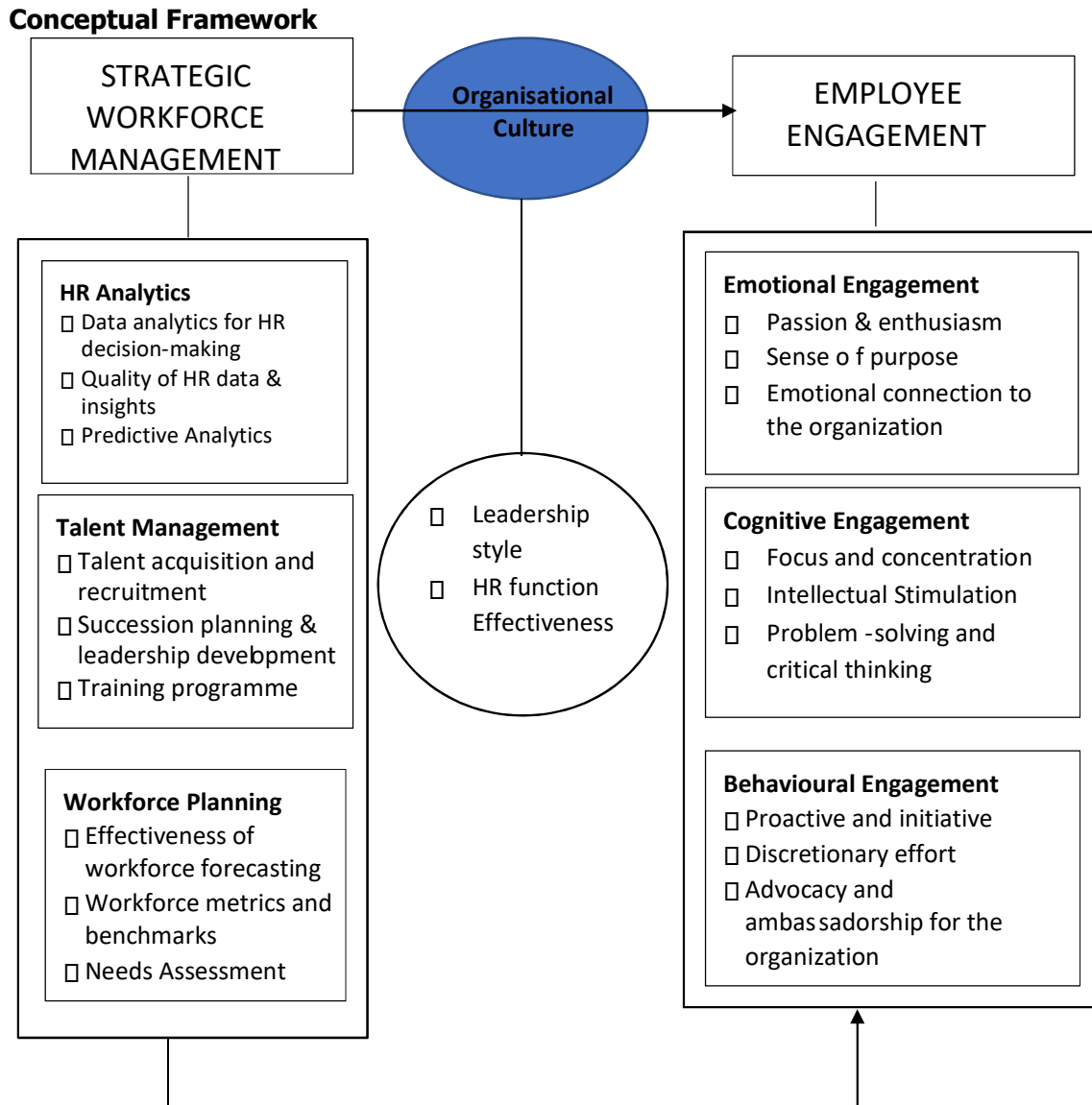


Fig. 1.1: A conceptual framework showing the criterion and predictor variable on strategic workforce management and employee engagement of tech companies.

Source: dimensions of strategic workforce management adapted from (Mello, 2014), Desk Research (2024).

Aim and Objective of Study

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between strategic workforce management and employee engagement of tech companies in Rivers State. While the specific objectives were to:

1. determine the relationship between HR analytics and emotional engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
2. examine the relationship between HR analytics and cognitive engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
3. ascertain the relationship between HR analytics and behavioural engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;

4. determine the relationship between talent management and emotional engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
5. establish the relationship between talent management and cognitive engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
6. ascertain the relationship between talent management and behavioural engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
7. examine the relationship between workforce planning and emotional engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
8. determine the relationship between workforce planning and cognitive engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
9. ascertain the relationship between workforce planning and behavioural engagement of tech companies in Rivers State;
10. determine how organizational culture moderate the relationship between strategic workforce management and employee engagement in Tech Companies in Rivers State.

Concept of Strategic Workforce Management

Strategic Workforce Management (SWM) is a holistic approach to managing an organization's workforce, focusing on aligning HR practices with business objectives to drive success, (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003). Strategic Workforce Management involves integrating HR functions, such as talent management, workforce planning, and performance management, to create a high-performance workforce (Huselid, 1995).

Alignment with business objectives: Strategic Workforce Management ensures that HR practices are aligned with the organization's overall mission, vision, and strategic goals, (Becker & Huselid, 2006). Integration of HR functions: Strategic Workforce Management integrates various HR functions, such as recruitment, training, and development, to create a seamless talent management process. (Huselid, 1995). Focus on strategic talent: Strategic Workforce Management prioritizes the development and retention of strategic talent, recognizing their impact on business performance (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005). Data-driven decision-making: Strategic Workforce Management relies on data and analytics to inform HR decisions, ensuring that practices are evidence-based and effective. (Cascio & Aguinis, 2008). Continuous improvement: SWM fosters a culture of continuous improvement, encouraging experimentation, learning, and innovation in HR practices. (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003).

One fundamental aspect of strategic workforce management is achieving optimal staffing levels. This involves striking a delicate balance between overstaffing, which can lead to inefficiencies, and understaffing, which may hinder productivity. By ensuring that the organization has the right number of employees with the appropriate skills, SWM can enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. Vacancy analysis is another crucial component of strategic workforce management. By monitoring vacancies within the organization, leaders can assess the size of the workforce. Excessive vacancies may indicate understaffing, while too few vacancies could signal overstaffing. Through effective vacancy analysis, organizations can make informed decisions to optimize their workforce structure. Competency alignment is a key focus area in strategic workforce management. This involves aligning the competencies of employees with the current and future needs of the organization. By assessing the skills, knowledge, and abilities required for various roles, organizations can ensure that they have the right workforce configuration to drive success and achieve strategic objectives.

Succession management is another critical component of SWM. By engaging in succession planning, organizations can ensure a pipeline of talent for critical positions. Identifying high-potential employees and grooming them for leadership roles is essential for long-term organizational success and sustainability. Cost management is a significant consideration in SWM, where labor cost optimization is crucial for effective financial resource balancing. Agility is a key characteristic of a well-managed workforce, emphasizing flexibility and adaptability to respond effectively to market changes. Skill development is essential in SWM, ensuring a competitive and agile workforce through

continuous learning and competency acquisition. SWM, led by business and HR leaders, aims to optimize costs, enhance operational efficiency, and meet organizational objectives in the short and long term (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2017).

Research on agility highlights the importance of developing agile capabilities deeply embedded in organizational culture beyond processes, focusing on continuous change commitment (Hopp *et al.*, 2004). Skill chaining in production lines with cross-trained workers enhances operational efficiency by ensuring resource operability when needed (Muduli, 2017). Workforce agility is promoted by high-order organizational practices built on low-order practices, emphasizing the foundation for agility (Muduli, 2016). Enablers like new capabilities and innovation drive workforce agility, requiring interdependence for activation (Xing *et al.*, 2020). Dynamic capabilities are linked to workforce agility, emphasizing the need for a dynamic workforce (Menon & Suresh, 2020).

Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement has evolved over the years, with its first published use attributed to (Kahn, 1990), who emphasized how psychological experiences at work influence employees' task performance (Wingerden *et al.*, 2015). Scholars such as (Marcey and Schnier, 2008) define employee engagement as positive feelings, motivation, and effort that employees invest in their jobs (Baghdadi *et al.*, 2020). Engaged employees are passionate, committed, motivated, and energetic, contributing significantly to organizational success (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020).

The concept of employee engagement has evolved significantly since its introduction by (Kahn, 1990) who defined it as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles. In the tech industry, this concept has taken on additional dimensions due to the unique characteristics of the sector, such as rapid innovation cycles, high-pressure work environments, and the prevalence of knowledge workers. Organizations recognize that engaged employees are a valuable asset, leading to improved productivity, quality, customer care, and reduced turnover and absenteeism (Utami, 2023). Transformational leaders play a crucial role in nurturing employee engagement, promoting better work engagement, and reducing turnover intentions (Guo & Hou, 2022). Additionally, job crafting has emerged as a bottom-up approach to enhancing work engagement, where employees proactively modify their job tasks and relationships to increase resources and challenge demands, positively impacting engagement and performance ("Quality of working life: job crafting, work environment types and work engagement," 2024).

Recent research has highlighted the multifaceted nature of employee engagement in tech companies. (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018) propose that engagement in this context encompasses not only job engagement but also organizational engagement and professional engagement. This multidimensional view recognizes that tech employees often identify strongly with their profession and the broader tech community, in addition to their specific job roles and organizations.

One of the key drivers of employee engagement in tech companies is meaningful work. (Pink, 011) argues that knowledge workers, who predominate in the tech sector, are primarily motivated by autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Tech companies that provide opportunities for employees to work on challenging projects, develop their skills, and contribute to innovative solutions tend to foster higher levels of engagement. Leadership plays a crucial role in cultivating employee engagement within tech organizations. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation and individualized consideration, has been found to be particularly effective in enhancing engagement levels (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014). In the dynamic tech environment, leaders who can articulate a compelling vision, foster innovation, and support individual growth are more likely to cultivate engaged teams.

The unique culture of tech companies also significantly influences employee engagement. (Schein, 2010) emphasizes the importance of organizational culture in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. Tech companies often pride themselves on fostering cultures of innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning. These cultural elements can contribute to higher levels of engagement by aligning with the values and aspirations of tech professionals.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture, defined as the shared values, beliefs, norms, and assumptions guiding behavior and interactions among employees. (Schein, 2010), plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between Strategic Workforce Management (SWM) and employee engagement. As a moderating variable, organizational culture influences the strength and direction of this relationship (Detert *et al.*, 2000).

Organizational culture can either enhance or hinder the effectiveness of SWM practices in promoting employee engagement. For instance, in organizations with a strong culture of innovation and experimentation, SWM practices may lead to higher levels of employee engagement, as employees are encouraged to take risks and try new approaches. (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). Conversely, in organizations with a culture of hierarchy and bureaucracy, SWM practices may be less effective in promoting employee engagement, as employees may feel constrained by rigid structures and processes. (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Organizational culture influences employee engagement in various ways, including shaping employee perceptions and attitudes, influencing interactions among employees and leadership, affecting autonomy and empowerment, and shaping the organization's approach to rewards and recognition. (Schein, 2010).

Different types of organizational culture exist, including clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy cultures. (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). These cultures can be assessed using various dimensions, such as artifacts, espoused values, and assumptions. (Schein, 2010). Measuring organizational culture can be done through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observational studies. (OCAI, 2020).

Human Capital Theory (HCT)

Human Capital Theory, developed by (Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, 1964), posits that employees' knowledge, skills, and experiences are valuable assets that contribute to organizational success. According to HCT, investments in human capital (e.g., training, development) increase employees' productivity and efficiency, leading to improved organizational performance. (Becker, 1964).

Human Capital Theory emphasizes the value of investing in employees to improve their skills, knowledge, and competencies. (Becker, 1964) argued that such investments yield returns not only for the individuals but also for the organizations that employ them. In tech companies, where rapid innovation and technological advancements are crucial, this theory is particularly relevant. Strategic workforce management in this sector involves aligning human capital with the organization's goals, ensuring that employees possess the necessary skills and capabilities to drive innovation and productivity.

Tech companies often implement strategies that align with Human Capital Theory by investing heavily in employee development programs, continuous learning opportunities, and advanced training in emerging technologies. These investments are seen as essential for maintaining a competitive edge in a fast-paced industry. For example, Google's extensive training programs and educational opportunities reflect its commitment to enhancing its employees' human capital, which in turn supports its strategic objectives of innovation and excellence.

Human Capital Theory contributes to this by suggesting that investments in employees' development can enhance their engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to exhibit discretionary effort, take initiative, and go the extra mile behaviors that are critical in tech companies (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). When employees perceive that their organization values and invests in their development, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and commitment, which fosters higher engagement levels. This is particularly relevant in the tech industry, where employee turnover can be high, and retaining top talent is a strategic priority. Providing continuous learning

opportunities and career development paths can significantly enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty, leading to higher engagement and retention rates.

The relevance of Human Capital Theory to the present study lies in its focus on the relationship between employee development and organizational outcomes. By understanding how investments in human capital can drive discretionary effort and extra-mile behavior, tech companies can better strategize their workforce management practices to enhance employee engagement. This theory provides a foundational framework for examining how strategic investments in employee development can lead to higher engagement levels, which in turn drive innovation and productivity. The implications of this theory are significant for tech companies. First, it highlights the importance of viewing employees as strategic assets whose development is crucial for organizational success. Second, it underscores the need for comprehensive training and development programs that keep pace with technological advancements and industry changes. Finally, it suggests that fostering a culture of continuous learning and development can enhance employee engagement, leading to better organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between strategic workforce management and employee engagement of tech companies in Rivers State has been established in this study. The findings of the study showed that the dimensions of strategic workforce management (HR analytics, talent management and workforce planning) adopted in this study contribute positively and significantly to the measures of employee engagement (emotional engagement, cognitive engagement and behavioural engagement). Based on the findings, the study therefore concludes that the strategic workforce management has a significant positive relationship with employee engagement tech companies in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Organizations should develop and implement policies that promote work-life balance, such as flexible working hours, remote work options, and wellness programs. These initiatives can help employees manage their professional and personal responsibilities, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity. Regularly assessing the effectiveness of these programs through employee feedback can ensure they meet the needs of the workforce.
2. Tech companies should recognize and reward employee contributions through non-monetary incentives such as recognition programs, professional development opportunities, and career advancement pathways. Providing employees with opportunities for growth and acknowledgment can enhance their engagement and commitment to the organization.
3. Organizations should periodically review and adjust their compensation packages to ensure they are competitive within the industry. This includes offering salary increases, bonuses, and benefits that align with employee expectations. Transparent communication about compensation structures can also foster trust and motivation among employees.
4. Leadership plays a significant role in shaping employee experiences and performance. Training programs for managers should focus on developing supportive leadership styles that encourage open communication, feedback, and collaboration. Leaders should be equipped to create an inclusive environment that values employee input and fosters engagement.
5. Organizations should cultivate a culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion, where all employees feel valued and respected. This can be achieved through diversity training, employee resource groups, and mentorship programs. An inclusive culture can enhance employee morale and engagement, contributing to overall job performance.

Contribution to Scholarship

This study makes significant contributions to the field of organizational behavior, particularly in the context of the tech industry in Rivers State. By exploring the relationships between HR analytics, talent management, workforce planning, and various forms of employee engagement (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral), it provides a deeper understanding of how strategic workforce management practices impact employee outcomes. The study also highlights the moderating role of organizational culture in this relationship, offering new insights into how culture influences the effectiveness of HR strategies in enhancing employee engagement.

Furthermore, the research expands on existing literature by focusing on the tech sector, a rapidly growing industry with unique workforce challenges. The findings underscore the importance of aligning HR practices with cultural values to foster engagement in a sector characterized by innovation and fast-paced change. This study also contributes to the broader discourse on employee engagement by offering a multidimensional approach, considering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of engagement within organizations. By focusing on tech companies in Rivers State, the research fills a geographical gap in the existing scholarship, offering valuable insights into the Nigerian tech industry's HR dynamics and engagement strategies. This localized perspective enriches global discussions on workforce management and employee engagement by showing how cultural and contextual factors shape these relationships in different settings.

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